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EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS
UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY
DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Our Last Opportunity.

From the Tribune.

In the light of the thrilling and glorious news now coming from Mexico, the true statesman—such a statesman, for instance, as Mr. Senator Chandler, or Mr. Representative Shanks—may well weep over America's lost opportunity. We see in the enlightened republic of Mexico the operation of what Mr. George Wilkes calls "irresistible civilizing" principles. The retrospect is humiliating, but nevertheless chastening. It is not pleasant to learn "irresistible" civilization from Mexico; but we cannot forget what might have been our position if we had followed this illustrious example—for "that American" (we quote the stately rhetoric of Mr. Wilkes) "must be cold indeed who is not touched with generous emotions at beholding the devoted men who have been the defenders of these principles victorious at last in the just punishment of Maximilian."

If General Grant, for instance, had possessed the sagacity as well as the military genius of Escobedo, he would not have wasted so much time over Richmond. The capture of Queretaro shows that our great commander is ignorant of an essential element of war. He should have sent some of our best soldiers into the town, and purchased it. It would have been cheap at a million of dollars—and there were, no doubt, many needy rebels who would have sold at half the money. There is no triumph more vulgar than war, and our Saxon nature too often yields to the degrading instinct of fighting. How much nobler, nay, more, how much more economical, and in keeping with our commercial genius as a nation, to see written under our trophies at Washington, "Purchased wholesale, for a million of dollars, by that renowned tradesman, U. S. Grant." Having thus "taken" the town, we should have at once ordered a court-martial. A dozen subalterns might have been executed. In America as well as Mexico it is well known that we have no lawyers so wise and merciful as the junior officers of the army. Davis should have been arraigned, and with him Lee, and Johnston, and Longstreet, and Beauregard, and all their captains. They should have been allowed twenty-four hours for their defense. With a court properly selected there could be no doubt of the result, and early in the morning succeeding, Mr. Davis and his generals would have been led out to Shookey Hill and shot. The spectacle of two or three hundred generals of the Rebel army, their persons purchased by the judicious expenditure of a moderate sum of money, gallantly shot by a sergeant's guard, would have gone down to posterity as the most glorious event in our history. Our children would not only rejoice over the "irresistible civilizing" effect of such a spectacle, but upon its amazing cheapness, and our orators would dwell for innumerable fourths of July upon the patriotism and cheapness of our victory over Rebellion.

Having thus disposed of the officers of the Rebellion, and, taking all the departments of the Confederacy, succeeded in shooting some 3000 or 4000 Rebels, we might have proceeded to take the money and confiscate the property. There should have been a judicious system of forced loans. All foreign merchants should have been made penitents for the purpose of showing our contempt for what Mr. Wilkes calls "the combined cohorts of monarchy and treason." The churches should be pillaged on general principles. We know no reason for this except that glorious Mexico teaches us that pillaging a church is "irresistible civilizing." We should have made an example of the nuns. We read with rapture how that superb citizen, Senor Juan Jose Baz, under the command of the gallant citizen General Porfirio Diaz, and carrying out the orders of his Excellency Citizen President Benito Juarez, ordered the nuns to disoccupy the convents of Mexico within 48 hours, and that 860 pestiferous, malignant, bloodthirsty nuns, whose sex and vocation are a menace to every free country, were turned out of their homes. The spectacle of 860 nuns, armed with their deadly crucifix and beads, and carrying treasonable and inflammatory prayer-books, marching out of their grey old convent gates, is "irresistible civilizing" that we can scarce restrain our wrath when we think what an opportunity Grant and Sherman and Sheridan disregarded. Mexico may well taunt us with these purposeless and unmanly wars, and point with pride to her Senor Juan Jose Baz and her citizen General Escobedo, who will never allow a woman so long as nuns are to fight, and will always capture a city when it is to be bought for money.

We have spoken of confiscation. Alas for the paribled statesmanship that lost this golden opportunity! There was so much in the South to confiscate—and we lost it all. There were Confederate bonds, and iron-clads that would not sail, and grey shoddy, and land. The one thing that we need in this country is land. Certain malignants tell us that we have more to give away than the black and white, were to go to farming. It is also said by the same pusillanimous creatures that if nine-tenths of the land in the South were to be given away, our soldiers would not take it unless compelled by a mandamus of the Supreme Court. These insinuations indicate a spirit of disloyalty, and show that we lack the "irresistible" civilization of Mexico. Having done this, we should then, to show our opinion of foreign friendship, have directed our newspapers to assail such men as John Bright, and Laboulaye, and Cobden. Take the letter of Ignacio M. Altamirano, a member of the Juarez Cabinet, for a model. Should it ever be said that the sympathy of the large and glorious Liberal party of France and England aided us in our war? Never! Let us admit that "the tears of ink shed at the news of our defeats" "afforded us some consolation," but let us rise above any petty exhibition of gratitude which would only have been construed to weakness.

Of the present condition of America, its deplorable peacefulness and its humiliating rest, we have not the heart to speak. Rather let us turn to Mexico, whose "irresistible" civilizing principles are to-day the admiration of the world, and the envy of the true American statesman. There may be some annoyances. Some of her honest sons have been shot. Others are exiled, others wander homeless in the mountains. The foreign Ministers are hurrying home, and in a few days an Austrian fleet will be before Vera Cruz. Commerce is destroyed; terror reigns in every home. What the soldier leaves the bandit takes. There is no law but the court-martial, no justice but the sergeant's guard. Beyond all, however, the Republic stands defiant; her principles are irresistibly civilizing, and 860 of her aunts

fly before the puissant Juan Jose Baz. Let America think of her lost opportunity and mourn.

The Whisky Frauds—Nature of the Remedies.

From the Times.

We are glad to see that the exposures we have made of the extent and character of the gigantic frauds practised upon the revenue of the country by whisky distillers and others, in collusion with the revenue officers of the Government, are attracting the attention of the authorities at Washington. The Secretary of the Treasury and the Commissioner of Internal Revenue have directed that no distillers or agents of distillers be appointed storekeepers in the bonded warehouses, and have applied for full information concerning the delinquent parties in the cases of fraud of which we have made specific mention. All this is well. It has importance, because it indicates a disposition on the part of these officials to do what may lie in their power by way of remedying the crimes and abuses which are rapidly bringing the Revenue Department to the brink of ruin. But these evils are not to be cured by the issuing of orders, or the removal of one set of knaves and the substitution of another set in their places. The disease is deep-seated, and demands a radical remedy. It demands the attention, the earnest, vigilant, and determined efforts of the Treasury Department, seconded and sustained by the President of the United States. Without his co-operation all efforts at reform will prove utter and disastrous failure.

The general impression seems to be that the evils we have exposed can be remedied by reducing the tax. Something might possibly be accomplished in that way; and we are inclined to think that on general grounds of justice and good policy it ought to be reduced. But it is higher in England than here, and is nevertheless collected without fraud or loss to any great extent. Many people suppose that most of the fraudulent whisky offered in the market is the result of illicit distillation, carried on in secret places unknown to the Government officials. This, we are satisfied, is a mistake. Such secret stills are to be found mainly in large cities. Beyond doubt, New York and Brooklyn have more stills in the cellars of dwelling-houses and in stables than all the rest of the country. And yet all who are well informed on this subject agree that the quantity of spirits produced in places unknown to the officers is absolutely insignificant. The reason is obvious. It is impossible to carry on a distillery for any length of time. Hogsheads of molasses must be carted to the place, and barrels of whisky must be taken away. Besides, it is impossible to ferment molasses so as to make whisky without producing an odor that can be detected for some distance, and which makes the place a nuisance to all those who reside in its immediate vicinity. It was in this manner that both Friel and Mulrany, recently convicted in Brooklyn, and sentenced to the State Prison for illicit distillation, were discovered. Let the Government offer a reward of \$250 for every illicit distillery that is broken up, and \$250 for the conviction of the person carrying it on, and the information against all these small places will be forthcoming. We venture the assertion that there is not to-day, and cannot be in the future, a distillery carried on in the city of New York or Brooklyn for ten days, without being known to at least twenty different persons, and without offending at least half of the community. All this is necessary, therefore, is for the Government to make it a greater object for the persons having this information to divulge it than it is for them to keep silent. The illicit distillation of whisky is comparatively of but little moment, and can be entirely suppressed. It is not in this direction we are to seek for a cure. The evil is to be found in distilleries that are now under the immediate supervision of Government officials in places visited daily by Government officers, who suppress the facts that come to their knowledge, and for a bribe accept returns they must know to be utterly false.

But it is said the temptation is too great to be resisted, that the hope of sudden riches will induce both the citizen and the official to violate the law, and that the corruption fund furnished by the \$2 tax is so large that it is impossible to get officials who will enforce the law. This we do not believe. If the Government were to rely entirely upon the moral sense of the citizen not to violate the law, and of the official not to permit its violation, doubtless this would be so. But no Government or people have ever thought of doing this. We have penal codes enacted expressly for the purpose of enforcing obedience to the laws on the part of those who, but for the risks of imprisonment, might be tempted to violate them.

All experience has proved that the certainty of imprisonment will restrain the commission of crime. Crime flourishes just in proportion as the criminal calculates upon the chances of escape. There was a time when counterfeiting had become so general as to threaten the absolute destruction of the national currency. It was a long time before the Government got to work, and the risk incurred seemed as nothing compared with the gains to be realized from dealing in counterfeit money. But the time came when counterfeiters were watched, detected, arrested, convicted, and imprisoned. And the result is that there never was a time when counterfeiting was so free as counterfeiting money is at present. Let the manufacturer of fraudulent whisky be pursued and punished in the same manner, and let a few of the officials who connive with and aid them in the commission of their crimes be compelled to exchange their "palatial homes" for a felon's cell at Sing Sing, and the frauds on the revenue will rapidly diminish. Making whisky is not as profitable as the manufacture and vending of counterfeit money. Nor can it be carried on with the same secrecy. A man cannot carry a hoghead of molasses around in his trunk, as he can a counterfeit plate, nor can he carry a barrel of whisky to market from a secret place. Grant the same immunity to the manufacturer of fraudulent whisky as is granted to the manufacturer of counterfeit money, and the frauds on the revenue will rapidly diminish. Making whisky is not as profitable as the manufacture and vending of counterfeit money. Nor can it be carried on with the same secrecy. A man cannot carry a hoghead of molasses around in his trunk, as he can a counterfeit plate, nor can he carry a barrel of whisky to market from a secret place. Grant the same immunity to the manufacturer of fraudulent whisky as is granted to the manufacturer of counterfeit money, and the frauds on the revenue will rapidly diminish.

We have said that a reduction of the tax will not remedy the evil. One fact shows this. The tax on oil is only twenty cents per gallon, and yet the fraud in oil is just as universal as the frauds in whisky. Oil should pay the Government a revenue of \$18,000,000 per annum. For the last three months it has paid nothing. Honest men were first driven from whisky and tobacco, and now they are being driven from oil also. And this, unless the evil under which the country is now suffering can be corrected, is destined to extend throughout the entire list of taxable articles. Honest men who pay their taxes, and who would scorn to purchase exemption by dividing with the official, cannot compete with a dishonest one who will. It would be a national disgrace as well as a national ruin, for the Government to permit honest men to be driven from one branch of business after another of those most heavily taxed, until the

commerce of the country in every article where the tax will afford a profit shall be given up to the swarm of scoundrels that for the present seem willing to confine their operations to whisky, tobacco, and oil.

The Government is under the most sacred obligations to protect the business man who pays taxes from the ruinous competition of the one who does not. That this cannot be done by a reduction of the taxes is plain. Having learned how to do it, the dishonest taxpayer and corrupt official will continue to divide so long as the tax is worth dividing. Nothing but an entire removal of the tax will answer.

Take the article of whisky as an illustration.—An ordinary distillery will manufacture from 2000 to 4000 gallons of spirits every twenty-four hours. At 3000 gallons per day it would pay the Government at the present tax \$6000 daily, or about \$2,000,000 per annum. Reduce the tax to \$1 per gallon, and the distiller who, by colluding with the officers, can evade paying of the tax, would have as the result of a year's operation in a business in which not over \$50,000 is invested, a million dollars to divide; reduce the tax to fifty cents, and he still has \$500,000; and if you go still lower and fix it at twenty-five cents, there still remains the very respectable sum of a quarter of a million. Now, if we remember that in order to secure absolute immunity, it is only necessary for the taxpayer to collude at most with two or three distillers combining would be able, even with a tax of twenty-five cents per gallon, to offer inducements not likely to be disregarded by officers who have become familiar with the rules of division by practising on larger figures, especially when we remember that most of the men who fill these offices could not command, out of them, salaries of three thousand per year. With three distillers in a district each distiller could pick his men and divide, even at 25 cents per gallon, \$20,000 per month. This is no insignificant sum even in these times of paper money. To remedy the evil by destroying the inducement to corruption we must entirely remove the tax. Nothing less will answer, and we must not only remove the tax on whisky and tobacco and oil, but on every other article where the amount of the tax is equal to a fair profit on the business. Thus will the Government be compelled to surrender, one after another, all its sources of revenue, until it is forced to choose between repudiation or the levying of a direct tax upon real estate, and limiting its Internal Revenue to those very few branches of business where collusion between the taxpayer and the officials will be impossible, or at least will be unavailing to avoid payment.

It is evident, therefore, that the remedy for the evil under which the country now suffers is not to be found in a reduction of the tax on whisky. What is needed is that the law shall be enforced. No one doubts the integrity of the Commissioner of Internal Revenue or the Secretary of the Treasury. Neither do we doubt their earnest desire to enforce the revenue laws, and to compel all to bear their just and equal share of the national burdens. We have repeatedly expressed our admiration of the financial skill of the Secretary, and of the great wisdom with which he has managed the affairs of the nation. But as a matter of fact, the administration of this particular branch of his department has thus far proved a failure. Corrupt, faithless, incompetent men have secured control of its machinery, and they have run it for their own profit and not for the good of the country. The very first step towards reform must consist in removing all such men from office, and putting faithful, competent, and determined men in their places. It is not enough that they are honest—they must also be capable and vigilant. Honesty is but one of the requisite qualifications for office. The officer who is only honest but half discharges his duties to the country. He is under equal obligations to be vigilant. To warrant his removal it should be enough that he fails to collect the taxes which Congress has levied. Until this rule is adopted and sternly adhered to, the revenues will never be collected, and it is little less than madness to require proof of fraud sufficient to warrant his removal. If the only condition for his removal is that he fails to collect the revenue, he fails to collect the tax imposed by law, and to return it to the Government—that fact alone is not justifies but demands his removal. So long as the Assessors sell the places under them, and for a price appoint as their Assistant Assessors, to have charge of distilleries of large districts, men who have been large and successful distillers of fraudulent spirits, how can we expect taxes will be collected? And yet, unless rumor does greater injustice than usual, such are the facts existing in at least one of the districts included within the Metropolitan Revenue District. Certain it is, that a prominent distiller—one who has probably distilled more spirits and paid less taxes than any man in the ward in which he lives, and who could not have carried on his business and avoided the payment of taxes on the spirits produced by him without having committed offenses punishable in the State Prison, has recently been appointed Assistant Assessor and assigned to charge of distilleries in a division having more distilleries probably than any other division in the two cities! And this officer, thus commissioned, signalled his advent in office by declaring to the distillers of his district that he was "willing to live and let live."

The retention of unfaithful men in office is but one of the evils to be remedied. There are others. The law has been broken up, and are rapidly crystallizing under the skillful manipulations of the corruptionists, who have become so completely formed and firmly established as to defy attack. We dwell at some length on one of them a few days ago. The bonded system is a source of infinite frauds. It tempts directly to the commission of fraud, for which it offers such unequal facilities. When whisky, after being manufactured, can be transported all about the country without paying the tax, carried into a dozen different districts, stored in a hundred different warehouses, and subject to the manipulations of a score of officials, any three of whom can screen it from the tax, it is next to impossible that the tax which is ought to be paid should be collected. The bonded warehouse system should be swept away altogether, and the tax collected the moment the whisky is manufactured. Or, if the interests involved are too strong for this, then there should be but three or four large warehouses in the city, into which all the spirits produced or brought here should be kept until they are put upon the market. They might then be watched; but when there are a dozen in every ward, it is almost impossible to subject them to the proper scrutiny.

The abolition of the bonded system would require an amendment of the law, and that for the present cannot be had. But the number of warehouses may meantime be greatly reduced, and that, of itself, would greatly restrict the evil. But what is most imperatively required is the enforcement of the existing law, and the first step towards that consists in detecting and punishing corrupt officials, and in putting them, as well as those who are simply incompetent or neglectful, out of office.

The President of the United States has a direct responsibility in this matter. It is impossible that he should know the details of the service. He cannot know whether a man is an honest or a dishonest, a competent or an incompetent officer, half as well as the Secretary of the Treasury or the Commissioner of Internal Revenue; and he does a serious wrong to the country when he allows political influence or any other influence to override the representation of these officers. When they certify that a man is unfit for his place, the President should see to it that he is at once removed. No amount of "influence," whether it be of politicians or of men interested in the frauds they seek to screen, should be allowed a moment's weight in retaining men whom they declare to be unfit.

It is a libel on the American character to say that honest men cannot be found to fill places of public trust and collect the revenues of the country. They can be found—men who will gladly accept office under the Government, who cannot be purchased, and who will honestly and fearlessly administer the law. But such men are not to be found among those put forward by the political rings and factions of city politics. These rings and factions are made up of men who make politics a business, and who live by the dishonest administration of office. The men thus put forward and urged for places are but the foot-balls of these rings; they seek power that they may get money, and get money that they may retain power. Officers in their hands are not administered for the public good, but for their own profit.

Mismanagement of the Treasury.

From the Herald.

The gross mismanagement of our national finances by Secretary McCulloch has reached a point that is really alarming. The frauds upon the revenue amount to something like a hundred millions a year in two or three articles only—namely, in whisky, tobacco, and petroleum. In fact, the whisky frauds alone swell up to nearly that amount. Astonishing as this statement is, it is not exaggerated; it is a well-known fact. Looking at these discovered enormous frauds in a few articles, and at the incapacity and neglect of duty on the part of the Treasury Department in other respects, as well as the not overestimated probably the entire losses to the Government at a hundred and fifty millions to two hundred millions a year, through having such an incapable man as Mr. McCulloch at the head of the Treasury Department. This is paying very dear for a poor whistle. What a cost is this Secretary to the country! No other country in the world could stand such mismanagement without becoming bankrupt in a year or two, and we cannot, with all our wonderful resources, stand it long.

Let us state some of the facts as far as they have been revealed. It is estimated that ninety millions of gallons of spirits a year were produced prior to the war. There has been a little less, if any, manufactured since; but allowing the large margin of thirty-three per cent. reduction in consequence of the increased tax, that would give sixty millions of gallons a year. The tax is two dollars a gallon, and, therefore, the revenue from this source at the lowest estimate ought to be a hundred and twenty millions. Last year the amount of revenue received from whisky was only thirty-three millions; this year, judging from the present returns, it will not reach twenty millions. Thus, we see, the Government is defrauded of upwards of a hundred millions a year from whisky alone. What the loss is from frauds in petroleum, tobacco, and other articles, we cannot determine, having yet no data to go upon. It is not less, probably, than fifty millions. Add to these sums the loss to the Treasury of over twenty millions a year on the circulation given to the National banks, the loss by keeping a hundred and forty millions of unproductive capital or money shut up in its vaults, the numerous leakages from defaulting agents, and the vast unnecessary expenditures in the management of the Department, and we shall have a total loss of over two hundred millions a year. An able Secretary of the Treasury could save this enormous amount. Mr. McCulloch loses it. Is not this paying dear for a very poor whistle?

But the Secretary may say the fault is with Congress. He may plead that in the matter of collecting the revenue Congress has passed laws that cannot be enforced; and as regards the loss by the national banks, he has no control over that. Should he make such a plea, we maintain there is no foundation for it. For the frauds on the revenue he is directly responsible. The revenue is collected in other countries, where the taxes or duties are higher on some articles than in this country—we may mention England particularly—and why should it not be collected here? It is collected with little loss, too, under a much less expensive system. With the costly machinery he has for collection, the British or French Government would scarcely lose a dollar. Frauds, perjury, and the criminal conduct of Government agents are punishable here as elsewhere. The laws, on the whole, are good enough if executed. The fault is in the administration of the Treasury in not appointing proper agents, in the want of vigilance, and in not bringing to punishment those guilty of defrauding the Government. But suppose the laws need amendment; who should know this, and who should point it out to Congress but the Secretary of the Treasury? That is his duty; he is placed where he is for that purpose. As regards his subordinates or agents, every business man—every one with common sense—knows that the head of an establishment is responsible for them. Any man in the ordinary business of life, at the head of a bank, commercial firm, or company of any kind, who allows frauds to be committed, or who is incapable of preventing them, is removed at once. Why should not the business of the Treasury be conducted on the same principle? Why should a man so utterly incapable be permitted to hold office?

With regard to the fraud upon the people by giving the national banks the profits of a national circulation, and in perpetuating a moneyed oligarchy that eats up the profits of a nation's industry, Mr. McCulloch is indirectly, if not directly, responsible. He was one of the original promoters of this infamous system, and has earnestly sustained it ever since he has been in power. If he had an idea above that of a little country banker he would see the monstrous evils of the national banking associations, both present and prospective; but he is out of his element; he has not the least qualification of a statesman; he is a mere village banker. Congress naturally looks to him for information on all questions of national finance and currency; yet he has recommended nothing but measures ruinous to the country. He has sustained the national banks, has increased their profits and power, has largely curtailed the proper national legal-tender currency, has increased the debt bearing gold interest, thus causing a heavy drain of the precious metals from the country; and has brought us to the verge of bankruptcy through a deficiency in the revenue, when by a proper administration of the Treasury that revenue might have been superabundant. Had he

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Fig. 3. Lovell's Knot, commencing with a revolving
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